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ABSTRACT

Because writing an outline on the chalk board wastes time and space, a computer program, a videoprojector, and a standard motion picture screen were used to outline a lecture to a large history class. PC-Outline is an outline program for IBM-compatible microcomputers which aids in processing outlines by inserting Roman numerals, letters, and Arabic numbers automatically. A special advantage is the program's ability to hide and then show lettered headings under a Roman numeral, with a single keystroke. PC-Outline features MacIntosh-like pull-down menus, and a nearly full-featured word processing program for editing and printing the outline. Six figures demonstrate different screens used during the lecture and the capabilities of the software. A photocopy of an article on PC-Outline from a computer journal is appended. (APG)

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USING COMPUTERIZED OUTLINES IN TEACHING AMERCIAN GOVERNMENT

BY

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1986

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USING COMPUTERIZED OUTLINES IN TEACHING AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Kenneth Janda
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Paper prepared for delivery at the 1986 Annual Meeting of
The American Political Science Association,
Washington, D.C., August 28 - 31

Everyone has his or her own style of lecturing to a large class. Mine is to talk from a detailed outline of my extemporaneous remarks. A few years ago, I started to write the major topic sentences of my outlines on the blackboard before I began my lecture. The students reported that they liked seeing the topics and the lecture's logical development, and I have kept it up in my two regular lecture courses: American Government with about 250 students and Elementary Statistics with about 80.

One problem with this method is that it often consumes about ten minutes of time that I don't always have before the class begins. Another problem is that I use up a good deal of board space with the outline, leaving little for my lecture proper. This year, I will be using a microcomputer outlining program -- PC-OUTLINE -- and a videoprojector (made by Electrohome) to display my outlines on a standard motion picture screen mounted at the front of the room. The videoprojector displays a green-on-black image that is easily read from any seat in the room, and -- with use of a light dimmer -- I can still write on the blackboard below the screen when I depart from the outline.

PC-OUTLINE is an outline processing program for IBM-compatible microcomputers. In essence, PC-OUTLINE aids in processing outlines by inserting Roman numerals, letters, Arabic numbers, and so on automatically. For me, its special advantage lies in being able to "hide" the "children" of a parent heading (e.g., the lettered headings under a Roman numeral, or the numbered headings under a letter) with a single keystroke of the gray "-" key. Another press of the "+" key (like a toggle switch) and PC-OUTLINE "shows" the children. This feature for selecting portions of a lecture outline to "hide" and "show" at will is what makes the program appealing to my style of lecturing.

Other outlining programs, most notably ThinkTank, have many of the same features as PC-OUTLINE. However, PC-OUTLINE is a "sharevare" program that can be freely copied and shared, using only the documentation available on the diskette. The program is also available for $49.95 plus $5 for shipping with more extensive printed documentation and automatic note of updates.[1] PC-OUTLINE has Mcintosh-like pull-down menus, and it also has a nearly full-featured word processing program for editing text in the outline and for printing the outline. For a comprehensive review of PC-OUTLINE, see InfoWorld of May 12, 1986.

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[1] SoftWorks Development; 750 Stierlin Road, Suite 142; Mountain View, CA 94043. Phone: (800) 538-8157.

My purpose here is to illustrate how PC-OUTLINE can be used in teaching American government. My example will be one of the "focus" outlines included in the ancillary materials to Janda, Berry, and Goldman, The Challenge of Democracy.[*] Please consult Figures 1 through 6.

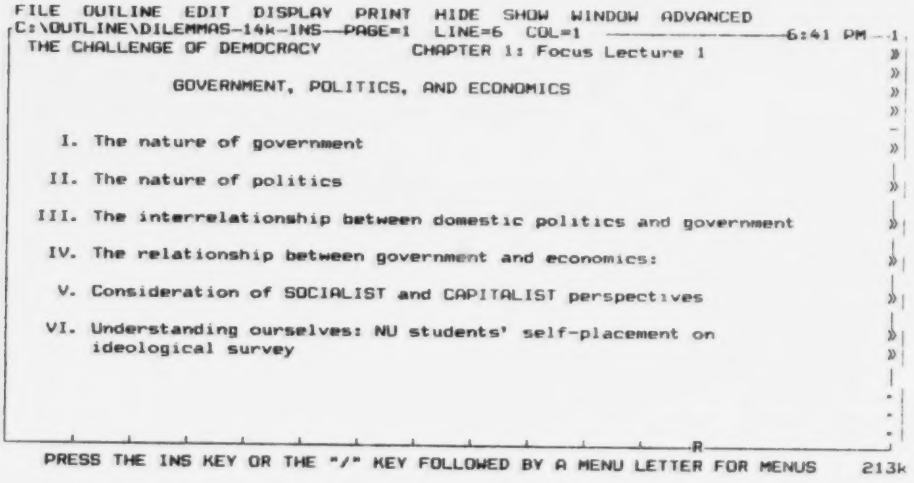
FILE OUTLINE EDIT DISPLAY PRINT HIDE SHOW WINDOW ADVANCED
C:\OUTLINE\DILEMMAS-14k-INS PAGE=1 LINE=6 COL=1 6:41 PM
THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY CHAPTER 1: Focus Lecture 1
GOVERNMENT, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS
I. The nature of government
II. The nature of politics
III. The interrelationship between domestic politics and government
IV. The relationship between government and economics:
V. Consideration of SOCIALIST and CAPITALIST perspectives
VI. Understanding ourselves: NU students' self-placement on ideological survey
PRESS THE INS KEY OR THE "/" KEY FOLLOWED BY A MENU LETTER FOR MENUS
213k

Figure 1 displays the six major headings of my first lecture in American government. I would comment very briefly on where we were beginning and where we would end up.

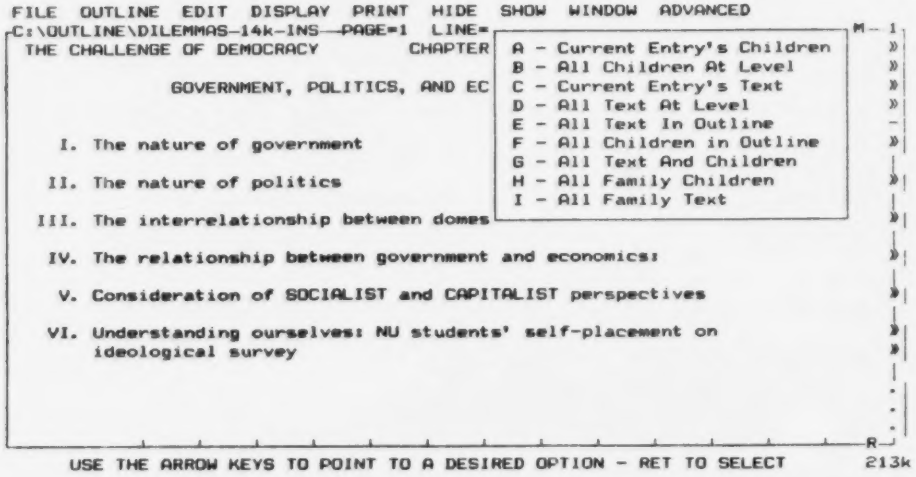
FILE OUTLINE EDIT DISPLAY PRINT HIDE SHOW WINDOW ADVANCED
C:\OUTLINE\DILEMMAS-14k-INS PAGE=1 LINE=
THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY CHAPTER
GOVERNMENT, POLITICS, AND EC
A - Current Entry's Children
B - All Children At Level
C - Current Entry's Text
D - All Text At Level
E - All Text In Outline
F - All Children in Outline
G - All Text And Children
H - All Family Children
I - All Family Text
I. The nature of government
II. The nature of politics
III. The interrelationship between domes
IV. The relationship between government and economics:
V. Consideration of SOCIALIST and CAPITALIST perspectives
VI. Understanding ourselves: NU students' self-placement on ideological survey
USE THE ARROW KEYS TO POINT TO A DESIRED OPTION - RET TO SELECT
213k

Figure 2 illustrates the "Mcintosh-type" menus in PC-OUTLINE under the "Show" heading at the top of the screen. By pressing the appropriate letter key, I can choose which of the "children" I wish to show. I select the default choice, A -- the Current Entry's Children.

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[*] Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey Berry, and Jerry Goldman, The Challenge of Democracy: Government in America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, forthcoming in 1987).

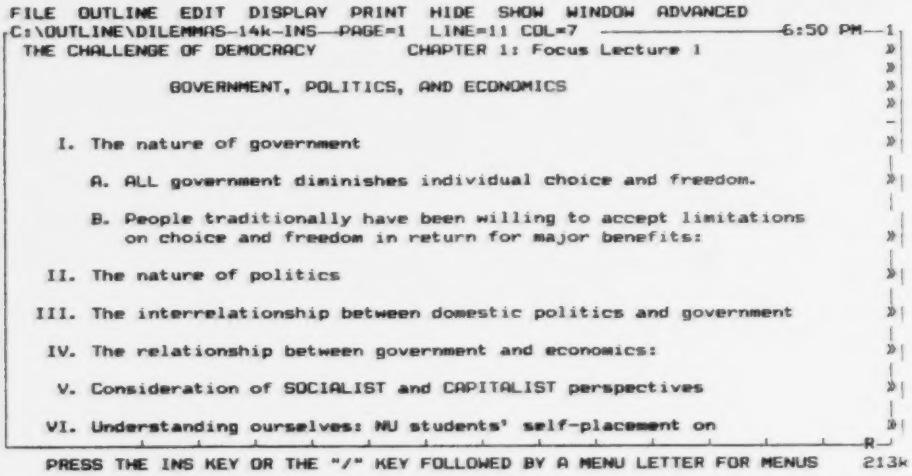

FILE OUTLINE EDIT DISPLAY PRINT HIDE SHOW WINDOW ADVANCED
C:\OUTLINE\DILEMMAS-14k-INS PAGE=1 LINE=11 COL=7 6:50 PM
THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY CHAPTER 1: Focus Lecture 1
GOVERNMENT, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS
I. The nature of government
A. ALL government diminishes individual choice and freedom.
B. People traditionally have been willing to accept limitations on choice and freedom in return for major benefits:
II. The nature of politics
III. The interrelationship between domestic politics and government
IV. The relationship between government and economics:
V. Consideration of SOCIALIST and CAPITALIST perspectives
VI. Understanding ourselves: NU students' self-placement on
PRESS THE INS KEY OR THE "/" KEY FOLLOWED BY A MENU LETTER FOR MENUS 213k

Figure 3 shows the children of the first topic, but only the "first-generation" children.

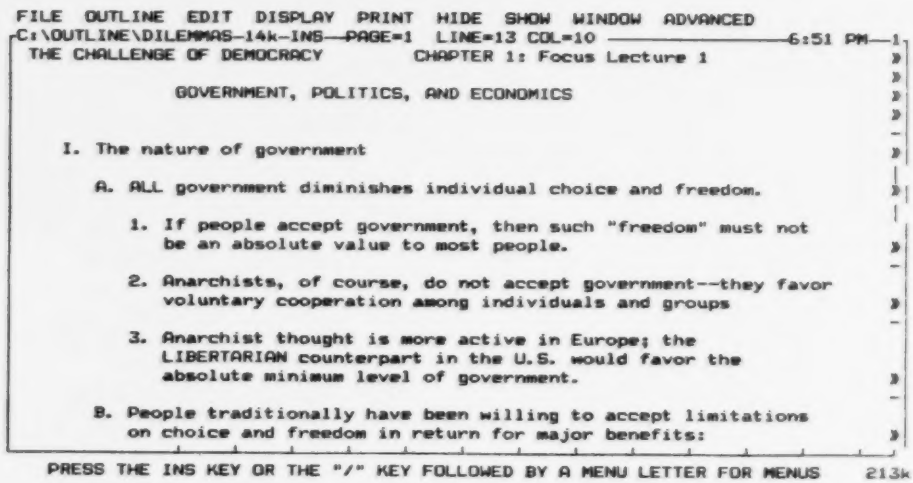

FILE OUTLINE EDIT DISPLAY PRINT HIDE SHOW WINDOW ADVANCED
C:\OUTLINE\DILEMMAS-14k-INS PAGE=1 LINE=13 COL=10 6:51 PM
THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY CHAPTER 1: Focus Lecture 1
GOVERNMENT, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS
I. The nature of government
A. ALL government diminishes individual choice and freedom.
1. If people accept government, then such "freedom" must not be an absolute value to most people.
2. Anarchists, of course, do not accept government--they favor voluntary cooperation among individuals and groups
3. Anarchist thought is more active in Europe; the LIBERTARIAN counterpart in the U.S. would favor the absolute minimum level of government.
B. People traditionally have been willing to accept limitations on choice and freedom in return for major benefits:
PRESS THE INS KEY OR THE "/" KEY FOLLOWED BY A MENU LETTER FOR MENUS 213k

Figure 4 reveals the second generation -- the children of A.

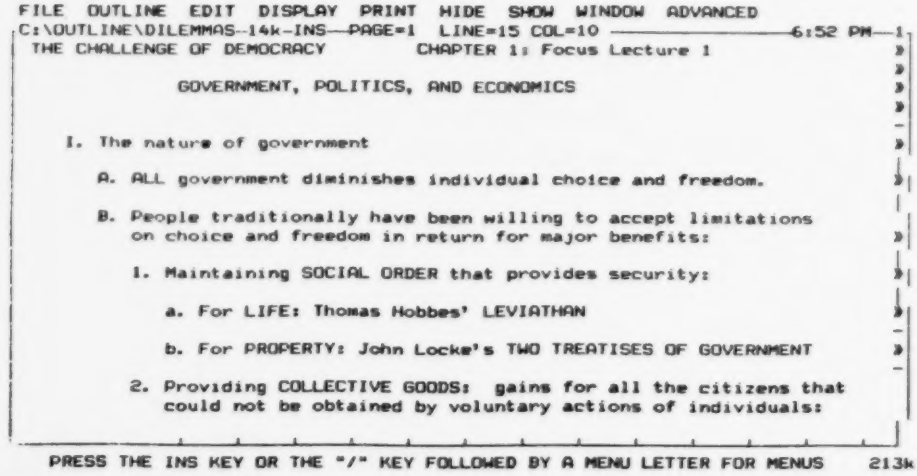

FILE OUTLINE EDIT DISPLAY PRINT HIDE SHOW WINDOW ADVANCED
C:\OUTLINE\DILEMMAS-14k-INS PAGE=1 LINE=15 COL=10 6:52 PM
THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY CHAPTER 1: Focus Lecture 1
GOVERNMENT, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS
I. The nature of government
A. ALL government diminishes individual choice and freedom.
B. People traditionally have been willing to accept limitations on choice and freedom in return for major benefits:
1. Maintaining SOCIAL ORDER that provides security:
a. For LIFE: Thomas Hobbes' LEVIATHAN
b. For PROPERTY: John Locke's TWO TREATISES OF GOVERNMENT
2. Providing COLLECTIVE GOODS: gains for all the citizens that could not be obtained by voluntary actions of individuals:
PRESS THE INS KEY OR THE "/" KEY FOLLOWED BY A MENU LETTER FOR MENUS 213k

Figure 5 shows B's children (after hiding A's children).

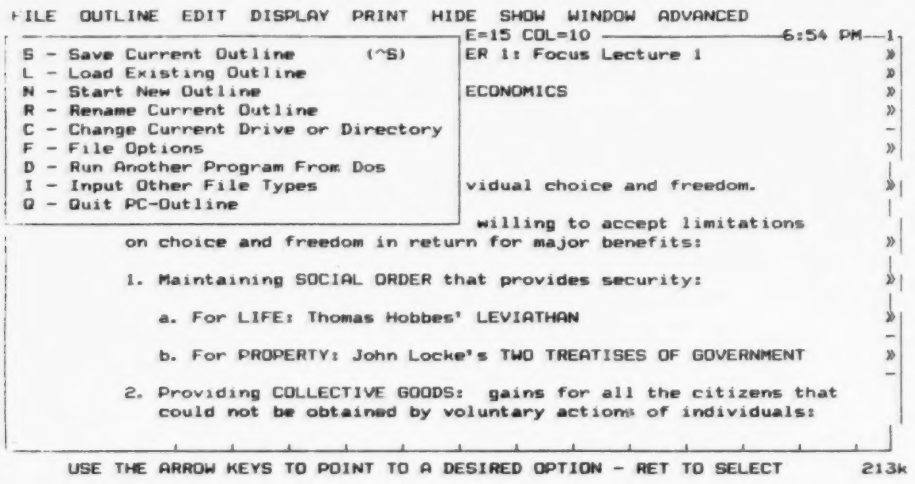

FILE OUTLINE EDIT DISPLAY PRINT HIDE SHOW WINDOW ADVANCED
E=15 COL=10
6:54 PM
S - Save Current Outline (^S)
L - Load Existing Outline
N - Start New Outline
R - Rename Current Outline
C - Change Current Drive or Directory
F - File Options
D - Run Another Program From Dos
I - Input Other File Types
Q - Quit PC-Outline
ER 1: Focus Lecture 1
ECONOMICS
vidual choice and freedom.
willing to accept limitations
on choice and freedom in return for major benefits:
1. Maintaining SOCIAL ORDER that provides security:
a. For LIFE: Thomas Hobbes' LEVIATHAN
b. For PROPERTY: John Locke's TWO TREATISES OF GOVERNMENT
2. Providing COLLECTIVE GOODS: gains for all the citizens that could not be obtained by voluntary actions of individuals:
USE THE ARROW KEYS TO POINT TO A DESIRED OPTION - RET TO SELECT
213k

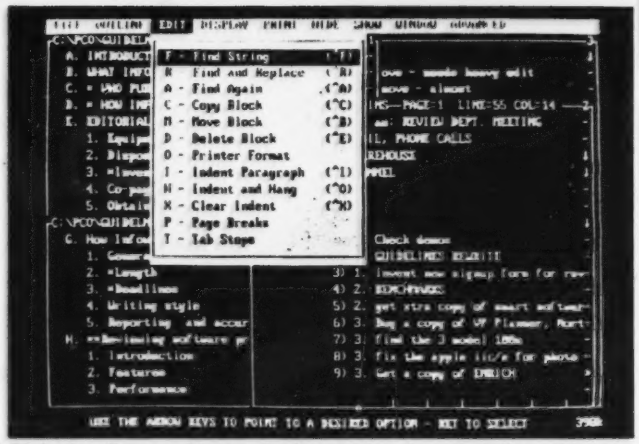
Figure 6 gives another view of the menu, this one under "File." Choosing the letters from this menu enables us to Save a file, to Quit PC-OUTLINE, and so on. We select Quit.

Students need not scramble to copy all the lecture comments that I display on the screen, for I show them how to print the ASCII files stored on our mainframe computer. But that's another topic.

For teachers who use highly structured outlines in their lectures, PC-OUTLINE is a very versatile program. And the price is certainly right.

PC Outline: Powerful Shareware For 'Ideas'

By Frank Tansey
Review Board


F - Find String
R - Find and Replace
A - Find Again
C - Copy Block
M - Move Block
B - Delete Block
O - Printer Format
I - Indent Paragraph
H - Indent and Hang
X - Clear Indent
P - Page Breaks
T - Tab Stops
USE THE ARROW KEYS TO POINT TO A DESIRED OPTION - RET TO SELECT

PC Outline offers several features that its competitors do not, including multiple windows, pull-down menus, numbered outlines, and automatic headline numbering.

The introduction of Thinktank several years ago launched a new class of outlining products that have come to be called *idea processors.* Now Softworks Development has introduced PC Outline, an outlining program that combines many of the features of Thinktank and Ready into one inexpensive program distributed as shareware. The product is interesting and, although still a little rough, shows lots of promise.

FEATURES: PC Outline is designed to be run either from the DOS prompt or as a memory-resident program. In either mode, most of the program's features are available to the user. The primary differences between the two modes are these: The memory-resident program is limited to 64K of outline space. The plain-vanilla version, on the other hand, lacks cutting and pasting but uses all remaining memory for outline space, and can be run when you have other memory-resident programs loaded that would conflict with the memory-resident version of PC Outline. Otherwise, the two versions have the same features and operations.

PC Outline invites comparisons to both Thinktank, the disk-based outlining product ("Just Cloning Around," August 26, 1985), and Ready, the memory-resident outliner ("This Handy Outliner Is Always 'Ready,'" October 21, 1985), both from Living Videotext Inc. of Mountain View, California. PC Outline holds up well in the competition, having a number of Thinktanklike features and a few unique elements that will tempt the Ready owner. One such element is windowing. PC Outline provides up to nine outline windows that can be sized and moved around the screen to overlap one another. Windows can hold up to 64K each, depending on memory. Another benefit is that the program automatically numbers outlines. Compared to Ready, PC Outline offers you the benefit of being able to enter paragraphs of information under outline headings, not just single-line entries. Outlines can be saved automatically at intervals you set. A pull-down menu shows update status (whether a window's outline has been edited since last saved).

Users can transfer information in and out of PC Outline in a variety of formats. Incoming information is accepted in ASCII, Wordstar, and Structured format, which allows you to transfer Thinktank and Ready outlines to PC Outline. A keyboard macro utility lets you redefine any key or even any key command. PC Outline offers a brief online help facility and pull-down menus to facilitate use of the program. The program disk comes with eight freeware utilities for various purposes, including unloading the memory-resident version of PC Outline.

PERFORMANCE: The more we worked with PC Outline, the more we appreciated it. We easily developed projects and reports, maintained our phone and address lists, and organized long-range and daily to-do lists. In all of these tasks, PC Outline's performance was excellent.

One of the best features is the capability to write paragraphs of text directly under outline headings without any special preparation. The text is entered just like anything else in the outline, except that wordwrap and justification are on. A lengthy list of word processing features is available for the text material, including page breaks and cut-and-paste, which lets you copy text to other text paragraphs in the same outline or other outline windows. Thinktank's text feature is cumbersome by comparison and Ready doesn't have the feature at all.

Another great feature is numbered outlines. PC Outline provides four ways to list items in an outline: with traditional sequential numbering (I, A, 1, a), with procedural numbering (1, 1.1, 1.2), with bullets, and with no numbering. It's easy to select among these options. You can even skip a number to begin renumbering within a single outline. By contrast, neither Thinktank nor Ready numbers its outlines.

We were able to import a Thinktank outline into PC Outline easily and quickly. When we exported a small file to Ready, however, we found that PC Outline had dropped the first character in each line; the program is evidently still a bit raw in places.

When importing a large (178K) Thinktank outline, we discovered that PC Outline is limited to 64K. This is better than Ready's 32K limit but hardly comparable to Thinktank's 4-megabyte files. Then we discovered an undocumented bonus feature. PC Outline's nine windows can each hold up to 64K in the disk-based version of the program, depending on the amount of memory you have. Our 512K system had 426K to distribute among our nine windows. That still doesn't measure up to Thinktank, but being able to window and compare outlines on screen is definitely a desirable feature that adds considerably to PC Outline's power. The memory-resident version can only subdivide 64K among its nine windows, but this still means you can get, for example, two 32K windows compared to Ready's single 32K window.

The program is very fast in all operations. It switches among its windows quickly, and the time required to save the information is very short. Printing is equally easy and also very fast. We were able to print selected portions of outlines that had crossed the boundaries of the outline points, a capability not available with either Thinktank or Ready.

We were able to run the memory-resident version of PC Outline with other memory-resident programs and most applications. However, we were unable to use the memory-resident version with Microsoft Windows or with programs running in Hercules graphics mode. This is when one appreciates having a nonresident version of the program available.

PC Outline is missing a few performance features. Unlike Ready or Thinktank, PC Outline has no hoist/de-hoist command that lets you isolate and view only a portion of the outline, nor is there the Ready phone dialer feature. PC Outline does allow you to mark multiple outline entries and then move or copy them within the outline, something Thinktank, Version 2.0 can also do but that was dropped from Ready.

PC Outline earns a very good in performance because of its bonus features such as numbered headings, full-text entries, automatic saves, and nine windows.

DOCUMENTATION: The documentation provided with PC Outline is, for the most part, clear and concise. The 47-page manual discusses using the program through pull-down menus and shortcut commands. The manual is primarily a reference guide, although it does provide some hints for using the program. In version 1.06, a couple of files in outline form have been added to provide additional user tips for specific advanced features.

Unfortunately, as a reference guide it sorely needs an index. You wouldn't think you'd need an index in a 47-page manual, but the publishers have crammed so much information into so little space that you quickly feel the lack of it. We get the feeling that the manual is not updated to keep pace with the program's burgeoning capabilities.

As shareware, the program comes with an on-disk manual. You get a typeset version of this when you register the program. We found errors in the typeset documentation. For example, the command for beginning a new outline entry is given as return, whereas it should be control-return. This was a small drawback, and since we did not find the same error in the disk documentation or on-line help, we assume this was a printing error.

PC Outline also provides easily accessible on-line help in a one-screen list of key commands. The on-line help and the pull-down menus also show shortcuts to the commands.

Although we found the documentation clear, direct, and refreshingly to the point, the lack of a needed index and missing pieces of important information force us to rate documentation poor.

EASE OF LEARNING: For several reasons, we found PC Outline very easy to learn, but not everyone may. The pull-down menus make it simple to select and execute a command, but it's not always easy finding explanations for the selections in the manual. Prompts are clear when you select options. The command structure is logical enough, but shortcut keystrokes and key commands are not organized according to any principle, and the only reference to key commands is in a quick-reference chart in the back of the manual. The documentation, although short, snappy, and easy to read, is missing both information and an index. Because it's a fairly simple program

overall, we are able to rate ease of learning satisfactory, but it could be made a lot easier.

EASE OF USE: The commands used by PC Outline differ from those used by Thinktank or Ready, but we had little trouble with PC Outline's approach to commands. Inexperienced users we consulted found the program very easy to use and in some ways more logical than Thinktank or Ready. For example, adding a paragraph of text below a topic heading is as easy as hitting return, typing the paragraph, and hitting control-return to get back to the topic headings. Thinktank requires exiting the heading procedure to enter the paragraph procedure, then reversing the process, which adds steps.

The pull-down menus that facilitate learning also make PC Outline easy to use. The menus are logically grouped, easily accessed, and fast in operation. The many shortcuts make the program even easier to use.

We did have problems. Ctrl-D deletes a headline entry, which Wordstar users will find a problem since they are accustomed to using that command to move the cursor. Fortunately, PC Outline has a keyboard macro feature that lets you redefine that command and switch it to the delete key. The keystroke commands are not mnemonic or organized in any other way, so it will take using the program every day for some time before you can abandon the pull-down menus and use the commands directly.

PC Outline allowed us to customize our version of the program to support different printers and monitor types, to preselect our default subdirectories, and to determine our automatic backup interval.

We found the pull-down menu functions well-organized and direct, with the results being predictable and accurate. We consider PC Outline satisfactory in ease of use.

ERROR HANDLING: One nice feature of PC Outline is the automatic save and backup option. Users can select an interval at which the program will automatically back up work in progress. When work is saved, the user can choose to retain the previous version as a backup. The automatic save feature is especially appreciated in the memory-resident version, where it's easy to forget you have the program there. It's a feature we miss in Ready.

There is also a prompted save that is oddly implemented. If you exit the program using the pull-down menu, you are asked if you want to lose changes you've made. But if you exit the memory-resident version, you are not prompted to save changes. In this way, the program is like Ready.

We were more concerned about the lack of prompt to confirm deletions. While testing Version 1.04, we learned the benefits of prompted deletions the hard way, when we accidentally deleted the wrong entry and lost all of that entry and its subpoints. What makes it worse, is that the program lacks an "undo" feature, so we couldn't recover the data. We would have been inclined to find the program poor in error handling for this lack, but the most recent version of PC Outline (1.06) arrived, and it prompts for all deletions. The program still does not offer an undo feature, as Ready does.

There are no error messages, just a very short beep when you try to do something like close the only window or search for a text string that doesn't exist. It was something we missed.

During our use of PC Outline, we encountered no system errors. And the several versions of the program we used seemed to add capabilities to the program, rather than simply deal with bug fixes. The only real bug we found was the loss of the first character in each line of an outline that we exported to Ready.

The bonus of the automatic saving option is balanced by the lack of error messages. We rate PC Outline satisfactory in error handling.

SUPPORT: PC Outline is not copy-protected, and the authors encourage its copying as the primary form of distribution. PC Outline can be run from a floppy or hard disk.

We contacted Softworks Development several times with questions, and each time we received detailed and complete answers. Because PC Outline is a shareware program, we usually found ourselves talking to the author of the program, which greatly accelerated the diagnosis of problems.

Softworks Development encouraged comments about PC Outline during our calls. While we were examining the program, we advanced from Version 1.00 to Version 1.06 in a little more than a month, with free updates being provided to registered owners. The company responded quickly to identified problems or user suggestions. Because of the update policy, the shareware concept, and the publisher's attention to customer concerns, we consider support to be very good.

VALUE: At $54.95, PC Outline is a bit over half the price of Ready and a quarter of the cost of Thinktank. Yet it is powerful and flexible, combining most of the features of both of its rivals and adding some innovative features of its own that greatly enhance performance. Although still being refined, PC Outline is already an attractive product in many ways and a very good value.

Frank M. Tansey is a university administrator. He has been working with computers since 1966 and teaches computer application classes.

InfoWorld

REPORT CARD

PERFORMANCE SOFTWARE

PC OUTLINE

6.5

	Unacceptable	Poor	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent
Performance	☐	☐	☐	☑	☐
Documentation	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐
Ease of Learning	☐	☐	☑	☐	☐
Ease of Use	☐	☐	☑	☐	☐
Error Handling	☐	☐	☑	☐	☐
Support	☐	☐	☐	☑	☐
Value	☐	☐	☐	☑	☐

SUMMARY

PC Outline is a powerful outlining processor that can be memory-resident or run from DOS. It offers many of the features of its competitors along with more: automatic saving, numbered outlines, macros, and nine windows in the disk-based version. A shareware product that, despite some documentation shortcomings, is easy to learn and well-designed, it is an excellent value.

PRODUCT DETAILS

List price, $54.95, or obtain copy from another user. Version tested (1.04) available for the IBM PC and compatibles running PC-DOS or MS-DOS 2.0 or greater; requires 128K, one floppy disk drive. Softworks Development, 750 Stierlin Road, Suite 142, Mountain View, CA 94043; (800) 538-8157, ext. 844, or (800) 672-3470, ext 844, in California.